

FW: Comments on Draft Montgomery County Climate Action Plan

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To: [REDACTED]

From: Fred Lehnhoff [REDACTED]**Sent:** Friday, February 5, 2021 3:07 PM**To:** Climate <Climate@montgomerycountymd.gov>**Subject:** Comments on Draft Montgomery County Climate Action Plan**[EXTERNAL EMAIL]**

Good afternoon -

Thank you for the ability to review and comment on the draft Climate Action Plan. It is clear that a lot of thought, energy, and effort went into developing this document, and it is quite comprehensive. Below are some thoughts I had on reading through the material.

1 - There is a LOT of material to get through, and one has to dedicate quite a bit of time and attention in order to read it all. In order to gain widespread public understanding and acceptance of the plan, it would help to create a companion summary document, intended for general audiences, which captures the key points of the plan in no more than 20 pages.

2 - The name "Action Plan" is a bit of a misnomer. That's not intended as a quibble on nomenclature but rather as a concern for its implementation prospects. The document as written is more of a strategic vision, or brainstorming document, or high-level roadmap. In my experience, it's not an action plan until you can manage against it, and that means assigning deliverables, dates, and resources (human, financial, and others). There are so many strategies and actions in the document, and many of them require large amounts of funding from public and private sources that may not be available, not to mention authorities that do not currently exist. Assessing resource availability realistically up front allows you to define scope, set priorities, and lay out a high-level schedule of what's achievable and when. Otherwise, you risk trying to "boil the ocean" with just a box of matches.

3 - An overarching theme of the document is transitioning much of life in the county, from buildings to transportation to total energy usage, to electricity. That creates a tremendous reliance on the electric power generation capability of our utilities, as the plan notes, but also on the distribution network in the county, where the latter has been shown to be particularly vulnerable to outages. Migration to an all-electric economy may be a

desirable goal, but it requires serious risk mitigation efforts around outages stemming from natural events (storms, wind, ice) and potentially from malicious actors. That may mean seriously considering burying power lines. As someone who has lived in an all-electric house my entire time in the county, I know how extended (or even short) power outages can be dangerous or life-

threatening (e.g., loss of heat in the winter or air conditioning in the summer). If the entire economy of the County depends on electricity, even if some of it is from distributed sources, outages can have even more significant impacts than they do now.

4 - A number of the actions in the document show more than one lead organization, sometimes four or five. Experience has shown me that there should be only one accountable lead organization per initiative. The others can be significant participants or leads for components of an initiative, but progress will be slow or nonexistent if more than one organization is officially in charge.

5 - Given the likelihood of limited resources, the County may be best positioned as a facilitator (e.g., the Green Bank) and cheerleader of change, with some command and control (e.g., building codes, performance standards) aspects in the mix. Unfortunately the County's experience with its first-in-the-nation carbon tax in 2010 shows what hurdles can arise from government-imposed measures. There is a need for a sweeping change in culture and norms around sustainability and climate, and some level of public relations is needed at the outset to get a critical mass of County residents on board. Thankfully, it appears that there is a good base to begin with in Montgomery.

6 - My sense is that market forces will drive the bulk of the sweeping changes needed to reach the County's emission reduction goals. When the right products at the right prices are commercially available, there will be tipping points where conversions to sustainable practices and products will proceed with their own market-driven momentum. With that in mind, the County's plan should be formulated and refined in the context of emerging technologies. For example, what is the horizon for commercially viable fuel cell vehicles, or utility-scale off-grid storage for energy from solar and wind? With those anchors in place, the County would be better positioned to define short-, mid-, and long-range priorities for its climate actions, picking off the low-hanging fruit first while emerging technologies ripen.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment. I wish you all the best for success in these endeavors.

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